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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ROME 000064

SIPDIS

DOE PLEASE PASS TO WILLIAM KILMARTIN AND STEPHANIE CLARKE

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SUBJECT: BREAKTHROUGH ON NUCLEAR SECURITY IN ITALY

REF: A. ROME 001  
[B](#). 09 STATE 114008  
[C](#). 09 ROME 508  
[D](#). 09 ROME 506

Classified By: DCM Elizabeth Dibble for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

(C) 1. SUMMARY: On January 11, Post learned that PM Berlusconi's office has specified that the Italian Customs Agency (Dogana) will take the lead in the GOI on implementation of the Department of Energy's Megaports program. This program places radiation detectors in key seaports. Post has been trying since 2004 to get Italy to cooperate on Megaports; in previous efforts the lack of clear direction from the top allowed different Italian Ministries to pass the buck, claiming that Megaports was not their responsibility. This order from the top of the GOI - which comes as a result of a personal appeal to Berlusconi by Ambassador Thorne - breaks that logjam and should allow us to move this key nuclear security program forward. Megaports is especially needed in Italy due to organized crime's tight grip on seaport operations in certain ports in the country and the resulting lack of certainty about cargo inspection reliability. A high-level contact at the Ministry of Economic Development says that now all GOI ministries are aware of the program and there is a unified desire to participate. Dogana officials are enthusiastic. Post is already working with Dogana and DOE to bring a Megaports team to post in February. End Summary.

(C) 2. PM Berlusconi's office has named the Customs Agency (Dogana), in the Ministry of Economy and Finance, as the lead agency to work with Post and the Department of Energy to bring Megaports to Italy. Megaports is a DOE program that aims to protect the U.S. from nuclear attack by placing radiation detectors in key overseas ports to prevent the illicit transport of nuclear and radioactive material. A Megaports team first visited Italy in 2004, but since then the project has languished due lack of clear direction from the top. Since early 2009 Post has worked with DOE colleagues to push the program at the highest levels of the Italian government. In a September meeting, Energy Secretary Steven Chu asked Minister of Economic Development Claudio Scajola to help bring the program to Italy. Ambassador Thorne also made an appeal to Scajola, and, on recent visit to PM Berlusconi's home in Milan, personally asked Berlusconi and Undersecretary Gianni Letta to help with Megaports.

(SBU) 3. As a result of these appeals, Ministers discussed Megaports at a January 8 Cabinet meeting; the GOI alerted Post on January 11 that Dogana would take the lead. The next day, EcMin and EconOff met with Daniele Mancini, Diplomatic Advisor to Minister Scajola, who in previous conversations had indicated support for the program. Mancini said the

reactions to Megaports at the Minister's meeting were "beyond my expectations." He said many now view the program as something that will truly benefit Italy (rather than seeing it as solely benefitting the USG). Mancini said the GOI wants to take ownership of Megaports and its future in Italy.

(SBU) 4. On January 13 EcMin and EconOff met with a team from the Italian Dogana, led by Director Giuseppe Pelleggi. Pelleggi said they are ready to organize port visits and meetings for a Megaports team, and the visit was set for the week of February 15. He asked for additional information on the radiation portals and what material they detect as well as information on training of Italian staff and a copy of a sample Megaports MOU.

(C) 5. COMMENT: This marks a big step forward for Megaports in Italy. In the past, GOI officials were skeptical of the program and lack of buy-in from the top allowed ministries to pass the buck and otherwise stall. The Christmas day attempted terrorist bombing of a trans-Atlantic flight seems to have been a wake-up call for the GOI and has spurred action on the issue. There are still some gaps in Dogana's understanding of the program, but we are working with them on this. The momentum seems established, and Customs' desire to be a part of the anti-terrorism solution, along with PM Berlusconi's commitments to the Ambassador to deliver for the U.S. should keep the program moving forward. Post is working with the DOE Megaports office to bring a team to Italy next month to tour the ports of Genoa and Gioia Tauro and to meet with GOI officials in Rome. Our hope is that a Megaports MOU will be signed before the President's nuclear security summit in April. End Comment.

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THORNE